

Message Text

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P R 092110Z JUL 75

FM AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE

TO RUEHCWYSECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 215

INFO AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO

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E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: EAID EAGR HA

SUBJ: PREPARATION FOR CONGRESSIONAL HEARINGS

REF: STATE 157994

1. INFORMATION ON LAND OWNERSHIP CONTAINED IN TIME ARTICLE REPORTED REFTEL APPEARS BASED ON RUMORS RE OWNERSHIP OF SUGAR MILL WHICH HAVE BEEN CURRENT IN PORT AU PRINCE FOR PAST YEAR. TO BEST EMBASSY CAN DETERMINE, FOLLOWING IS STATUS OF LAND OWNERSHIP IN MOST FERTILE AREAS OF COUNTRY.

A) BIGGEST LANDOWNER NEAR PORT AU PRINCE IS PROBABLY HASCO (HAITIAN AMERICAN SUGAR COMPANY) WHICH CULTIVATES ESTIMATED 6,400 ACRES OF CROPLAND IN CANE. HOWEVER, BY FAR GREATER SHARE OF LAND IS OWNED BY SMALLER FARMERS. FOR EXAMPLE, INDIVIDUAL FARMERS CULTIVATE SOME 21,000 ACRES OF SUGAR CANE WHICH IS SOLD TO THE MILL. THERE ARE, AS WELL, DAIRY AND VEGETABLE FARMERS PRODUCING FOR PORT AU PRINCE MARKET. FURTHERMORE, DESPITE NAME, HASCO IS NOT AN AMERICAN COMPANY. MAJORITY OF SHARES WERE SOLD TO HAITIAN INDUSTRIALIST FRITZ MEVS IN SPRING OF 1975. (FYI: THERE HAVE BEEN RUMORS THAT MEVS BOUGHT THE SHARES FOR THE DUVALIER FAMILY OR WAS FORCED TO RESELL THEM TO THE FAMILY AFTER PURCHASE. EMBASSY HAS BEEN UNABLE TO DETERMINE TRUTH OF MATTER AS YET BUT WILL CABLE IF ANY FURTHER DETAILS ARE UNCOVERED. END FYI.)

B) THE TWO OTHER SUGAR MILLS IN HAITI, BOTH OF WHICH ARE AMERICAN OWNED, ALSO ARE SURROUNDED BY GOOD LAND. HOWEVER,
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THEY NEITHER OWN NOR LEASE LARGE PLOTS. THE CIE SUCRIERE DU SUD

(NEAR LES CAYES) HAS NO LAND AND RELIES ON 3500 INDIVIDUAL FARMERS WHO PLANT APPROXIMATELY 18,000 ACRES (OR SLIGHTLY OVER 5 ACRES PER FARMER) IN CANE. THE CALDOS SUGAR COMPANY CLOSE TO CAP HAITIAN DOES OWN SOME LAND, BUT IT, TOO, MUST RELY ON INDIVIDUAL FARMERS FOR MAJORITY OF CANE SUPPLIES.

C) IN SUMM -- THERE ARE FEW LARGE PLANTATIONS IN HAITI. INSTEAD, MOST OF THE LAND IS OWNED AND CULTIVATED BY SMALL SUBSISTENCE FARMERS. SOME 3360 SQUARE MILES IS DEVOTED TO AGRICULTURE, WITH 2.5 PERCENT OR 80 SQUARE MILES PLANTED IN SUGAR CANE. OF THIS 80 SQUARE MILES, APPROXIMATELY 10 SQUARE MILES, OR 12.5 PERCENT, IS OWNED BY A MILL, WITH THE REMAINING 87.5 PERCENT OWNED BY SMALL FARMERS. ALTHOUGH EMBASSY CANNOT DETERMINE HOW MUCH LAND IS OWNED BY DUVALIER FAMILY OR FRIENDS, HARDLY ANY OF THE GOOD FERTILE LAND IS OWNED BY AMERICAN INTERESTS.

2. ACCORDING TO EMBASSY'S SOURCES, PETIT SAMEDI SOIR PUBLISHER AND EDITOR DIEUDONNE FARDIN WAS NOT RPT NOT IMPRISONED FOR ANY STORY THAT HAS APPEARED IN HIS WEEKLY MAGAZINE, WHETHER ON THE DROUGHT OR ANOTHER SUBJECT. SOME PERSONS DO ALLEGE, HOWEVER, THAT FARDIN WAS CAUTIONED LAST JUNE BY GOH OFFICIALS CONCERNING THE TONE OF HIS DROUGHT ARTICLE. IN ANY CASE, WE ARE SEEKING TO ESTABLISH DIRECT CONTACT WITH FARDIN (WHO GENERALLY STEERS CLEAR OF FOREIGNERS) AND WILL REPORT ANY FURTHER DETAILS.
ISHAM

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